

American Intellectual History, 1860 to 2000

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"There is but one thing more interesting than the intellectual history of a man, and that is the intellectual history of a nation."
—Moses Coit Tyler, 1878

Overview:

Since the end of the Civil War, American intellectuals have transformed the shape of our culture. The coming of modern life in America, signaled by industrialization and the rise of the United States internationally, brought many changes not only in the material life of Americans, but also in their intellectual life. Today, we are the inheritors of the ideas and thinking methods embraced during the last two centuries. Our arguments about standardized testing in education, about human cloning and stem cell research, about politics and the world all have their roots in ideas of the past. To understand those arguments and our ideas today, we must investigate the origin and development of those ideas.

This course will investigate the major and some minor trends in American thinking from the Civil War to the present. The purpose of the course and objectives for the students are dual. First, the course seeks to help students gain a mastery of the important ideas and thinkers of American history. Second, it seeks to introduce students to the methods and techniques of intellectual history. As a methodological part of the course objectives, students will be expected to communicate their own ideas both in class and in writing.

The course assumes a basic understanding of the major events in American history during this period. It is structured chronologically, but our goals will preclude us from focusing too closely on a structured narrative of events in this period. Our methodological approach will involve the close examination and reading of major texts and documents from the past. By the end of the course, students will have a demonstrated ability to comment on the major ideas of American history and how they affected our culture.

Class Structure and Discussions:

Through the course of the semester we will meet together thrice weekly. Because an important part of learning about history is communication, students must come to class prepared to engage the material covered in the readings for that week. The structure of the sessions will be a mixture between lecture and discussion. Attendance is mandatory and you should be prepared to discuss the readings for that week, which includes the possibility of being called upon in class. Unexcused absences will not be tolerated. Because I recognize that unexpected crises do sometimes occur in a student's life, I am willing to allow one *excused* absence—but only if the student notifies me by phone or by e-mail *before* the absence.

Office Hours:

Each week I hold open office hours. During this time I make myself available to answer questions related to topics brought up in the discussions, ideas in the readings, and general topics related to history. If ever there is something that you do not understand, or wish to understand further, do not hesitate to contact me. If these times are not convenient, you may contact me in person or via e-mail to make other arrangements.

American Intellectual History, 1860 to 2000**Writing Requirements:**

During the course of the semester you will be required to write two papers. I have designed these assignments to serve two purposes. First, I want to make sure you leave this course with a clear idea about how to communicate your ideas on paper. A precise, convincing presentation of your thoughts is essential to becoming an effective writer. Second, the assignments will help you to demonstrate your mastery of the required knowledge. My policy for papers is that they must be turned in on time. I do not give extensions except in the most calamitous of circumstances (e.g., severed limb, coma, nuclear war). For each day the paper is late, it will be marked down one full letter grade (e.g., A- becomes B-, not B+). Further information on the assignments will be presented in class.

Quizzes:

There will be three quizzes during the course of the semester. They will be short and will cover material from the assigned readings for the week, so be sure you are always up to date. If you miss a quiz because of an unexcused absence, it will be an automatic zero—no exceptions. Quizzes missed because of excused absences will be made up by doubling the score from the next quiz.

Grading:

Your papers will constitute 55 percent of your grade (22.5 percent for first short paper and 32.5 percent for the final paper). Each quiz will be worth 10 percent of your grade. Your participation and performance in class discussions will count for 15 percent of your grade.

Improvement over the course of the semester will be taken into consideration.

Academic misconduct, as defined by the Duke Community Standard, will not be tolerated, and can be grounds for a failing grade in the course. If you have any questions about exactly what this means, do not hesitate to ask. Remember, ignorance of the rules is not an excuse. See: <<http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/plagiarism.htm>> for more information.

Readings and Schedule:

This course has six required books and a set of complementary readings available on Blackboard. All of the books can be purchased at the Duke Bookstore, online, or at local used bookstores.

- Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick*
- Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2001-1887*
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*
- Louis Menand, ed., *Pragmatism: A Reader*
- Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*
- Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*

Keeping up with the reading is vital if you hope to do well in the course. Read the material for the week *before* you attend class so that you will be able to participate in the discussion.

Reading for some weeks is heavier than others. Look ahead and make sure you know what's coming. Readings from the books will be indicated by title and page numbers. I have listed readings on Blackboard (BB) by author and title.

Week One (8/23, 8/25, 8/27): Introduction and Background

BB: "Southern Regeneration" and "Faith and Nature"

Week Two (8/30, 9/1, 9/3): The Darwinian Revolution in Anglo-American Thought

BB: William Graham Sumner, "Sociology," "Socialism," "What the Classes Owe Each Other," "The Absurd Effort to Make the World Over"; Charles Hodge, "Systematic

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Theology"; Robert Bannister, "'The Survival of the Fittest is Our Doctrine': History or Histrionics?"

Week Three (9/6, 9/8, 9/10): Darwinism (cont.)

BB: John Fiske, "Progress from Brute to Man"; Lester Frank Ward, "Mind as a Social Factor"

Week Four (9/13, 9/15, 9/17): The Culture of Success

Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick*
BB: Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth"

Week Five (9/20, 9/22, 9/24): Reform Thinking and Positivism

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*

Week Six (9/27, 9/29, 10/1): Progressive Thought

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*

Week Seven (10/4, 10/6, 10/8): The Origins of Pragmatism

Louis Menand, *Pragmatism*, 1-135.

Week Eight (10/13, 10/15): Pragmatism in Full Bloom

Louis Menand, *Pragmatism*, 181-300.

Week Nine (10/18, 10/20, 10/22): America in an Age of Normalcy

BB: H. L. Mencken et al., Scopes Trial Selections

Week Ten (10/25, 10/27, 10/29): New Deal Thought

BB: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Commonwealth Club Address," "State of the Union Address"; Rexford Guy Tugwell, "The Principle of Planning and the Institution of Laissez-Faire"; Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch"; Thurman Arnold, "The Symbols of Government"

Week Eleven (11/1, 11/3, 11/5): The 1950s and Cold War Thought

Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*

Week Twelve (11/8, 11/10, 11/12): Liberalism in Crisis, the 1960s

BB: Daniel Bell, "The End of Ideology"; Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement"; Weathermen, "Statement"

Week Thirteen (11/15, 11/17, 11/19): The "Radicalization" of American Thought

Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (begin)
BB: Betty Freidan, "Feminine Mystique"; Valerie Solanas, "S.C.U.M. Manifesto"; Judith Butler, "Gender Trouble"

Week Fourteen (11/20, 11/24): The Legacy of the 1960s

Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (finish)
BB: Additional Readings

Week Fifteen (11/29, 12/1): Looking Backward, Looking Forward

Louis Menand, *Pragmatism*, 301-362
BB: Additional Readings